

Dialogue for Solutions

Key Facilitation Skills

Leading a meeting or discussion isn't easy. Here are some tips to help generate and manage productive, civilized discussion in groups large and small.

- Keep track of who has spoken and who hasn't – invite the quiet people to participate. Don't let the expressive people dominate.
- Consider splitting into smaller groups occasionally so people feel more at ease.
- Enter the discussion when necessary. If the conversation is flowing, don't say much.
- Don't allow the group to turn to you for answers.
- Resist the urge to speak after each comment or answer every question. Let participants respond to each other.
- Once in a while, ask participants to summarize important points.
- Be comfortable with silence. People process information in different ways so allow people time to think. Everyone may need time to process.
- Dialogue is not a debate with winners and losers. When necessary, remind people of this.
- Don't allow the group to get stuck on a personal experience or anecdote.
- Keep track of time.
- Encourage diverse points of view. Ask them to look at the pros and cons. Have them play devil's advocate to articulate the opposite perspective. Ask them to switch shoes.
- Point out the areas they have in common.